

File Folder Schema

Concepts – An individual's schema for a topic changes as he reads. Some ideas are confirmed and some are proven false. New knowledge is discovered as one reads and this knowledge is added to the reader's schema.

A. Model whole class

1. Explain to the students that our brain is like a file cabinet. We have lots of information about different topics filed away in our brains. Show them the teacher's file cabinet and files as a comparison. The information in your brain files is your schema or background knowledge about a topic.

Everyone's schema for a topic is different, depending on your experiences and what you have read about a topic. Give some examples. Explain that as we read our schema changes. Some of our ideas are confirmed, and some are proven wrong. The ideas that we had that we find out are not true need to be thrown out. We add new schema to our mental files when we read new information about a topic.

2. Attach a file folder to chart paper. Pose a question to the students and write this question on a strip of paper, attaching it to the file folder with paper clips. Sample question that Debbie Miller used which worked into my lesson because of the time of year – "Why do leaves change color?" Ask the children for their schema on this topic. Record each response on a large note card and put it inside the file folder. Accept all responses.

3. Read a nonfiction book or parts of a nonfiction book that answers the question. After reading, reexamine the schema note cards and discuss which ones need to be thrown out. Take those cards out of the file and put an X through them. Discuss which schema were confirmed in the reading and put that back in the file. Put new facts that were learned on new cards, and put them into the file. If there was new information read that was connected to information put on a card before doing the reading, the new information can be added to an existing card to clarify or further explain an idea.

4. Follow up – Discuss how our schema changed when we read the book. Talk about how good readers are constantly changing their schema as they read.

B. Guided Reading Groups

1. Give each student a file folder with the student's name on it and paper clips to clip on a question to the front. Questions can either be broad to cover the whole book or specific questions can be asked for each section of a book. This decision depends on the book chosen. (I am giving each of the 4-6 members of a reading group a copy of the same nonfiction book so that we can have a common text to work with and the students can support each other in their work with schema.) Inside the file folder, glue a business envelope to hold strips of paper which contain a student's schema for a topic. Provide a library card pocket for a wastebasket in which the student can "trash" schema that has been proven wrong. Trashed schema are kept in the "wastebasket" so that the students can reexamine how their schema changed, and so the teacher can evaluate the students' processing of the activity.

2. Teach the students how to code their schema:

Put a star on strips of paper which contain schema that was confirmed by their reading.

Underline in colored pencil any new schema that was added during or after reading.

3. I have guided reading groups three days a week. Of the 4 groups that I have, I see the lowest group on all 3 days and the other 3 groups on 2 days each. The lowest group needs lots of support. I present them with a question which will be answered in their reading of the next 1-2 pages. They check through their schema strips that they wrote before we read the book, to see if they have already written anything on the topic and pull those strips out to share. I tell the students that they will read the next assigned pages and that while they are reading they should be thinking about whether the schema they have written is confirmed or disproved. They also need to be thinking about what is the most important new information they are learning so that it can be added to new schema strips. After the students finish the assigned reading, we discuss how our schema has changed, put stars by the schema that was confirmed, and trash any disproved schema. Then we discuss what is important to add to new schema strips. This group of students needs a lot of guidance in this area because they often want to

write down everything instead of sifting out the unimportant details from the main ideas.

The other reading groups need various levels of support. I start all of the groups out just like I do the lowest group, but the difference is that they are able to do more on their own and less with me. It is still important, though to spend some time each reading session processing what they have done and sharing how they have decided what to confirm, trash, or add. They really enjoy sharing what they have done with the small group, and it is an excellent way for me to get close with the students and really see who is grasping the strategy. They all get very excited when they are able to share schema that was confirmed, new schema that they want to add, and even schema that they have trashed!

Activity created by Debbie Miller
Adapted by Karen Carlson/Spring Trail